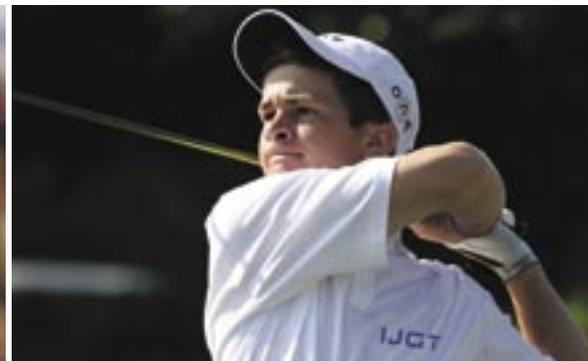




NYSPHSAA



Russell Kirk



The Ivy League

Whether it's high school wrestling, golf for people of all ages, or swimming on the Ivy League level, Long Island has the facilities, accommodations and location to create sports event success.

They keep coming back to Long Island

If repeat business is an indicator of success, then Long Island, NY, is surely one of the most successful, multi-faceted places in the nation to hold a sporting event.

No matter who you talk to, organizers and events right holders sing the praises of Long Island as an ideal location to hold their events, whether it's water polo, lacrosse, golf, swimming or any number of sports. Year after year, sports organizations like the NCAA, the International Junior Golf Tour and the Ivy League come back and for all the same reasons: high-quality facilities, hotels, restaurants and the Long Island Sports Commission.

In short, they believe the Island has some of the best sports venues in America. But just as importantly, it has the Sports Commission, which plays a pivotal role in ensuring that no matter what the event, organizers, athletes and fans all will be treated as a top priority, as partners, in fact.

"Many of our events aren't on the scale of the Final Four or Super Bowl, but all the same factors apply. The athletes and fans expect a high-quality experience," says Wayne Burrow, director of championships for the NCAA, which will hold its NCAA Division I Lacrosse Quarterfinals at Stony Brook University, May 20-21, 2006. "Apart from the sports venues, the folks at the Long Island Sports Commission really know how to get the best possible hotel room rates and manage other critical aspects of hosting an event.

"What we've always looked for in all of our hosts is a quality facility and a great relationship between the NCAA and the local sports commission," he adds. "In Long Island, they have done a tremendous job in the past. Not only do they have the facilities, but we also have access to a great group of volunteers, and they are completely enthusiastic about hosting."

John Stanley, tour director for the International Junior Golf Tour (IJGT), says his organization is returning to Long Island for its sixth straight year.

"The Commission has been great in helping us find accommodations for our players, their families and fans," says Stanley. "Long Island is a great golf environment, with a tremendous number of outstanding courses, and our members really like playing there."

Regina Zara, director of sales and sports development for the Long Island Sports Commission (a division of the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, www.funonli.com), says the Island is home to a unique concentration of athletic facilities that meet the highest competition standards for a variety of popular sports.

"We have public and private sports facilities, experienced event professionals, a solid volunteer base, tiered hotel room rates, and a strong transportation infrastructure," says

Zara, noting that the Long Island Sports Commission has a 13-year history of helping bring national and international sports events to the Island. "These elements, combined, appeal to event rights holders on every level. We have the facilities to host major sports events as well as smaller, lesser known events."

"To us, no matter what the event, we'll do whatever is necessary to create success," she adds. "We have a partnership mentality and focus on forging long-term relationships, and that thought process works for us."

Of course, the U.S. Open Golf Championship (which returns to Long Island in 2009) and the Belmont Stakes (the third leg of horse racing's

Triple Crown), are among the most recognized sporting events held on Long Island. But in the recent past, there have been many, many others, including:

- 1998 Goodwill Games
- 1999 Empire State Games
- 2001 NCAA Division I Women's Swimming and Diving Championships
- 2002 and 2004 FINA World Cup (swimming)
- 1999-2005 Big East Swimming and Diving Championships
- 2003 Ivy League Swimming and Diving Championships

Major Long Island Sports Facilities

• Baseball Heaven Sports Complex

The Complex consists of seven baseball fields and is equipped with all the amenities of a professional ballpark.

• Belmont Park Racetrack

Belmont Park is the site of the annual Belmont Stakes, the third leg of the Triple Crown. The park encompasses more than 400 acres and is available year round. The beautifully landscaped park includes large open spaces suitable for a variety of sporting events.

• Bethpage State Park

Bethpage State Park is best known for its five world-class golf courses, but visitors flock to the park to use its picnic facilities, bridle paths, hiking and biking trails, playing fields, tennis courts and cross-country skiing trails.

• Citibank Park

Citibank Park, a \$20 million, 6,002-seat state-of-the-art minor league ballpark, is home to the Long Island Ducks of the Atlantic League of Professional Baseball Clubs.

• C.W. Post Campus, Long Island University

• Hofstra University

• Mitchel Athletic Complex, Track & Field Stadium

A versatile state-of-the-art sports complex that provides a spectacular, professional setting for a full range of popular sports including baseball, field hockey, football, rifle/pistol, rugby, soccer, softball, track and field.

• Nassau Community College

• Nassau County Aquatics Center

The most premier aquatic venue in the country, it is the largest indoor competitive pool in the country and second largest in the world. The facility can host national and international events in all aquatic disciplines.

• Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum & Exhibition Center

The Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum complex consists of an 18,000 seat arena, a 60,000 sq. foot exhibition hall, 15,000 sq. feet of additional exhibit space, 3 meeting rooms and a 6,000 space parking lot.

• The Red Course at Eisenhower Park, East Meadow

Home to the Commerce Bank Championship-PGA Champions Tour

• Riverhead Raceway

Riverhead Raceway is one of the oldest stock car race tracks in the country, and was built in 1949. It is a one-quarter mile asphalt, high-banked oval that includes a Figure 8 course.

The raceway is located one mile east of the last exit on the Long Island Expressway (LIE) at exit 73. This is where the north and south forks of Long Island begin, making the raceway just minutes from the Hampton resort area on the south fork and the wine country on the north fork.

Riverhead Raceway is part of the NASCAR Winston Racing Series circuit and has been for

most of its existence. It is the only NASCAR stock car track in the New York metropolitan area. It has five to six racing divisions every Saturday night with an average car count of 150 cars in the pits. Competition is fast and furious. Riverhead also features many special shows such as the Demolition Derby, Enduros and the NASCAR Featherlite Modified Tour.

• Sports Plus

This facility features a 170,000-square foot indoor complex, which includes a 48-lane Bowling Center and full service pro-shop, an NHL Regulation Size Ice Rink with lockers and a full-service pro shop.

• State University of New York at Old Westbury

• Stony Brook University, Indoor Sports Complex

• Suffolk Community College Sports & Exhibition Complex

• The Rinx

Long Island's family recreation destination located on 93 acres in beautiful Hidden Pond Park in the Town of Islip. It is open to the public and offers two ice rinks with public skating sessions, three outdoor pools, tennis courts, ball fields, picnic area, skating school, hockey school, hockey leagues, pro-shop, jazzercise, physical therapy and conditioning center, pre-school, summer day camp, birthday and group skating parties and corporate parties.

- 1990, 1995, 2001 and 2005 Breeders Cup
- 2003 NYSPHSAA Gymnastics Championships
- 2004 NCAA Men's Division I Swimming and Diving Championships
- 2003 and 2005 FINA Water Polo World League Super Finals

With that impressive track record of hosting major sporting events, it's no wonder more and more sports organizations are coming back to Long Island. For example, the FINA World Cup in swimming will be returning to the Island in 2006 (January), as well as the Big East Swimming and Diving Championships (February), the Ivy League Swimming and Diving Championships (March) and the Boys State Lacrosse

"We have a strong history with the Long Island Sports Commission," Eaton says. "We've held our annual meeting on Long Island and also held our swimming championships there. When we needed a larger facility for wrestling, they had the right combination of facility and environment."

Eaton adds that the Long Island Sports Commission actually lent a hand to the NYSPHSAA a decade ago when it helped the state organization formulate its request for proposal (RFP) form for the group's championship site selection process.

"I've known Regina for several years, and they have always been very helpful," he says. "We've held at least one tournament there each year, in sports such as cross country, track and

reasons why swimmers and divers love coming to Long Island.

According to Chuck Yrigoyen, Ivy League associate athletic director, the reason the Ivy League initially came to the Aquatics Center in 2003 was that coaches knew about the facility and wanted to add a third venue for their championship event (the meet traditionally alternated between Harvard and Princeton, having the only two facilities that could hold the event).

"The coaches were looking to add to the rotation of the Ivy League pools," Yrigoyen explains. "People had been to the Aquatics Center and were very impressed."

Yrigoyen explains that when at least six meet records fell in 2003 at the Nassau facility, it was a sign that the Ivy League would be back.

"The thing that really struck me is that when you walk into the facility, you get a feel of a regional or national-type competition, which you don't get with a smaller venue," he says. "It's a big place, and it gave our meet just a completely different feel."

In addition to the superior facilities, Yrigoyen says that the Sports Commission provided outstanding service, whether that meant finding great hotel deals (about 200 athletes, 30 coaches and 2,000 fans were on hand for the final evening) or recruiting dozens of volunteers for chores such as timing and results running.

"The Sports Commission was instrumental in getting those volunteers for us, mainly local people who use the pool and love swimming," Yrigoyen says. "Columbia, the host school, only had to worry about the logistics of running the meet."

While there isn't a water polo event scheduled for 2006 yet, Claudio Bozzo, president of the organizing committee for the 2003 and 2005 Water Polo World League Super Finals,

says those two years represented the first time water polo events of this magnitude were held in the U.S.

"We wanted to impress the international committee and show them we knew what we were doing," says Bozzo. "We contacted Regina, who really helped us on the organizational side."

"We not only got that help, but she also provided contacts in the local community to make things happen, which saved on the cost of running the event," he adds. "We got great rates on hotels, and many of the players commented on how beautiful the hotels were. Of course, the facility is beautiful, too, in terms of the sport of water polo. The pool is large enough, the stands are in the right position, and a great room overlooking the pool was perfect."

Bozzo says the real testament to Long Island's hosting the Super Finals was they were held there two of the last three years.

"We had nothing for the last 100 years, and in the span of three years, we got it twice. That says a lot about Long Island and working with the Sports Commission," he says.

For her part, Regina Zara says the Long Island Sports Commission's value is that it considers event rights holders to be partners, not merely customers.

"We continue to build on that partner relationship," she says, proudly pointing to long-time relationships with groups like the NCAA, the NYSPHSAA and USA Swimming."

"The fact that people keep coming back means we are doing what our partner organizations want from us," she says. "And that's our number one priority."

For more information about holding your events on Long Island, contact the Long Island Sports Commission at 877-FUN-ON-LI (386-6654) or 631-951-3900, ext. 315, or visit www.funonli.com/sports.

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Regina Zara, director of sales and sports development for the Long Island Sports Commission

(June) championships. And, for the first time ever, the New York State Public High School Athletic Association (NYSPHSAA) Class I and II Wrestling Championships (February) will be held on the Island.

Walter Eaton, assistant director at the NYSPHSAA, explains that when the state split its wrestling tournament into two classes, the tournament size in terms of spectators and athletes required a larger venue. Because the NYSPHSAA alternates many of its sports championship events between upstate and downstate, Long Island's Nassau Veterans Memorial Coliseum fit the bill. Last year, 17,000 fans attended the tournament in upstate New York.

field, gymnastics and bowling – the sports that rotate from upstate to downstate."

Eaton adds that Zara and her staff know the NYSPHSAA schedule in advance and are sure to spread the word about those events to local hotels and sports facilities. "They are very accommodating and set up for us," he says. "The Commission continues to do that for us, including arranging for hospitality and sponsorships, which are critical for making sure our events are successful."

The Nassau County Aquatics Center is arguably one of the world's leading venues for swimming and diving. Among its many amenities is one of the largest indoor competitive pools in the country – but there are many

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Long Island: Island of Champions

- US Open Golf Championships – 1896, 1902, 1986, 1995, 2002, 2004, 2009
- Breeders' Cup – 1990, 1995, 2001, 2005
- NCAA Men's Division I Swimming & Diving Championships – 2004
- FINA Water Polo World League Super Final – 2003
- 1998 Goodwill Games

Long Island Convention & Visitors Bureau

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